

MAKING PORT ¹

BY RICHARD MATTHEWS HALLET

From Every Week

AS soon as old Tom was hoisted aboard the bark *Forensic*, he sat down on a hatch and inquired, "Whar to?" in an awed voice.

The new crew of that old hooker was lying about in the scuppers, after the manner of new crews: but one among us, Spike Moran by name, sat up and answered him:

"Where to? Why, you was there when the articles were signed, old feller. Sydney, New South Wales. Where was you hoping to go?"

"Liverpool," said that strange old man.

"Oho, I remember," said Spike. "You are the old one I was talking to on the tug, ain't you?"

"Ay."

With grave despondency he confessed to us that he had been trying to ship for Liverpool any time the last twelve years. Is there anything more uncertain than a seafaring life? As we looked closely at him, the old fellow turned his bleached eyes toward the Battery, and scratched his hide of a rhinoceros through the old yellow unwashed singlet he wore — scratched his ribs with a slow motion, as if numbed by the contrarieties of fate.

"What part of Liverpool?"

"Christian Street," said old Tom.

Christian Street — of all streets in the world of sailormen, the most unchristian and the most unholy!

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"You keep away from Christian Street," said Spike, "if you want to keep your claws on a pay-day."

Then old Tom, without moving his head, said, in a voice of feigned contempt, that he had a wife in Christian Street.

"Three years older than what I am," he said sorrowfully.

"How old are you, Tom?"

"Sixty-four," answered that melancholy old man.

Spike laughed.

"You would have more cause to complain if you was young, old feller," he said. "It don't make no real difference to you now, having a wife, unless you need nursing. But supposing you was young, and a girl was waiting for you in Sydney, New South Wales, and *then* you was shipped on the wrong ship, you'd have a right to complain, hey?"

Old Tom's eyes flashed with a light of scorn for youth, and he inquired:

"What girl is this?"

"The mission girl," said Spike proudly, gladly; "the one that comes out to the ship with the organ."

"Ay," said old Tom.

"You know her?"

"Ay," said old Tom.

Closing his eyes, he affected to remember that girl. No sailor can afford to be ignorant of any port or any ship or any woman mentioned in the narrative of a ship-mate.

"She wears rough pearls," said Spike, "in a chain round her neck. She is the daughter of a pearl-diver."

"Looking out for her beauty," said old Tom. "I know her. Yes, I have seen her. Black hair."

"No. Brown," said Spike.

"Oh, ay," said old Tom. "Yes; I remember her."

He was an old man going the wrong way again, and he looked at Spike with a kind of hatred.

It appeared that Spike's prospect of happiness, whis-

pered about the ship, had set the whole crew against him—all save little Jewdler, the apprentice, and me. You do not know how strong can be the attack on a man's soul by a combined ship's crew. He could do nothing to please them. He shaved them, he cooked special dishes for that watch, he lanced wire-poisoned fingers which the Old Man would n't touch, he stood for hours as policeman to the watch, in the tropics. You have heard of these nights wherein deep skies and soft trades induce the watch on deck to sleep in odd corners, out of the light of the moon? He was unwearied in serving those men. In vain. His good nature was like oil on this fiery resentment. It blazed up against him everywhere, until at last the starboard bo'sun, a battered, rough-handed sea-devil, found courage to strike him to the deck.

Later, still smiling, with his head bound in a bloody rag, he talked to old Tom.

"You are an old man, Tom," he said; "you had ought to know. Ain't a girl worth being kicked about a little to get? Ain't there some consolation to a beaten man in the thought that she is there?"

With the red rag fluttering at his brows, he pointed east, whispering: "There is a woman for you."

All this was lost on old Tom, and shattered against his stony ill will. What he knew he would not impart. Well, why should he? This world of water was just the dazzling blue ruin of his hopes.

"Whar to?" he had said feebly; and the mocking fates would only echo him. His voice came up to us as hollow as the echo in a tomb.

Twelve years already of plowing the seas, in an effort to set foot again on the stones of Christian Street. In vain. The malign fates had conspired with the gray gods of the deep to upset the plans of that unlucky old Ulysses. Ships had floundered under him. He had crawled up out of the sea to wander on inhospitable coasts. He had drunk fatal beers, and had waked in the

fo'c'sles of ill-starred packets — forsaken old sea-wagons that had borne him protesting to Calcutta or Bangkok or the mythical island of Yap, when he wanted to get to Liverpool.

Now, after these mighty agonies, he sat, bound for New South Wales, on that glittering sea-track that led fourteen thousand miles away from Christian Street. Poor old Tom!

Old Tom never softened his animosity toward Spike. He seemed to know from the first that his destiny would link with that big sailor's. It was in vain that we reminded him that he was the oldest man on the ship, and would be made night watchman in Sydney and have it soft; and that possibly this very ship would go to Liverpool.

"I'm done," said old Tom. "This is my last ship."

In a ghastly whisper he told us he could no longer swarm up a rope. Had tried and failed. The sap was out of him. This was his last ship.

Moving heavily in his oilskins, he whispered to us:

"We will all have to leave this ship, too, I am thinking. I saw a blue light off the foreyard-arm the other night."

"When was that, Tom?" asked little Jewdler. "What wheel was that?"

"The gravy-eyed wheel," said old Tom sadly.

"Must've been a star," said little Jewdler, mystified.

"No, it was n't no star," said old Tom, in the unruffled tones of a man sure of his ground. "Ain't you never heard of death lights? There's going to be death on this ship."

"How is that, Tom?" we whispered, terrified.

But old Tom was careful not to let fall too much wisdom. He would n't tell us how it came that a blue light meant death.

But he was right — old Tom was right.

The starboard bo'sun was a hound — a military hound: one of these ill-conditioned rats who had come out of the

Boer War with a scar or two and a yearning to demonstrate authority. He hounded Spike, on account of that girl in Sydney, until Spike knocked him down with his bare fist. Then the bo'sun came with his knife,—two men saw it in his hand,—and Spike knocked him down again, with a belaying-pin. And this time the bo'sun did not get up.

He had sea burial, and Spike they chained in the sail-locker. The Old Man was tearing mad, too, because the death of that man had made the ship shorthanded—as if there were not already enough farmers in the crew. It was like spearing him to make his ship shorthanded, and he told the mate he intended to see justice done. We knew what that meant; and we looked upon our shipmate thenceforth as a dead man.

The Old Man, as it happened, had n't the least confidence in his two mates, and he had had a row with the port bo'sun over the proper way of sending down a yard. Therefore he intrusted the keys of that locker to old Tom—who venerated the skipper, and also cursed him through the seven cycles of time.

Strange to think of Spike, the gentle-hearted, tied to a ring in an iron wall. We were afraid to creep there by night and speak to him through the port. Was he to die? A man who was in love to die? To exchange the torment of the seas for the black void of death? It was hard: but very likely. The word of the skipper would be law in that foreign court.

My heart filled with hatred of that old man who held the keys of Spike's prison. He was sitting on the after-hatch forcing the strands of a great yellow hawser with his teakwood fid. He was making ready the bowline. His big, crusty fingers moved with care. Many voyages he had terminated thus, not counting them in his life, since they did not lead to Liverpool.

In the hands of that old man the suggestion of this huge rope was hideous. My eye fell on him again and again as I played the ship through those giant seas.

That yellow shard of a man held the keys, held the destiny of Spike in the hollow of his hand.

Ordinarily it's a calm and holy business, furling the wings of the ship as she is going into harbor. There is a touch of awe in what you do to her then; as if you were stroking your good angel. There's the exhilaration of relief, and certain wild anticipations too, awakened by land odors. It is a lazy moment of hush and speculation, and of unconscious religion; and the ship bears you away into the dark heart of the unknown.

But this time we were struck with horror to see that dark coast rising before us. The ship was a funeral ship, straddled by death and the black vengeance that old Tom bore in his heart for Spike, our shipmate. Even now we could hardly credit the gloomy significance of this incarceration.

Little Jewdler and I, as we lay on the upper topsail-yard, gazed hard at that beacon throbbing through the dark gloom of the night — this night so still, so vast, so full of space. Once we had felt like storm-ridden vikings: now we quailed — the black water swarmed and seethed in coils and flickerings of phosphorescence; a silver band of light streamed by unendingly at the waterline, throwing up a light of magic on the ship's gray hull, making her under-body soft and unsubstantial.

All the while we heard the quiet voices of the watch aft floating up to us, we saw the coals in their pipes gleam and fade, like tiny beacons. We knew that they were leaning about, asking one another in throaty whispers who would stick to a ship where murder had been done.

Then we saw old Tom, sitting apart, in his yellow singlet, nursing memories of Liverpool in his heart of leather! We heard him say to the mate, in calm tones:

"There's a heavy dew falling. That means a shift of wind in this latitude."

We were filled with hate of his calm voice. Lying

with our chins on the round of that wide hanging yard, we recreated that starboard bo'sun only to do him to death again.

And high over the Southern Cross we saw swinging the red star that Spike had given that mission girl for her own. As if it had been a spark from the fire in his heart, it glowed deep.

"Must be eight bells," said the apprentice.

He clamored down and struck it. As we met again on the deck, the bo'sun said, "Watch is aft, sir," in the chastened voice of a man without enmities.

The voice of the mate came down in a tolerant undertone:

"Relieve the wheel and look-out."

The watch dissolved. Rolling men in shore-going shirts brushed past us. We heard a terrifying whisper from a big Yank:

"I tell you, I'm not going to see an American citizen done to death."

At once that black ship seemed to be alive with the mutterings of conspiracy. Our hearts thumped. Would they attempt a rescue at the eleventh hour? We crept after the Yank, and heard him say to a silent Dane:

"Sharks are nothing. He could splash when he got away from the ship. Better than swinging."

"Swinging!" We writhed on the latch, little Jewdler and I. That word hissed like a snake; it whistled through the air like a bullet.

Suddenly we saw the Yank padding after Tom in his bare feet, and we rolled into the shadow of the hatch. They stopped within five feet of us. We saw the teeth of that Yank shining against his terrifying beard. He had a deep, abrupt voice; his bold nose seemed to forge at you like a ram. But old Tom was turned half away from him.

"Are you going to see a man done to death? You give us the key, and we will see the man over the side all right, all right."

Old Tom hung his two fists at his side, and looked round him.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself — tempting an old man to desert his duty."

"Duty!" cried the Yank bitterly. "Why, darn it, there is n't no such word. I would shed my blood to save that boy from the rope."

"No," said old Tom.

He sat down on the hatch, weighty and incorruptible, puffing out a cloud of smoke. He seemed to be possessed by some rigorous ideal of conduct, and to peer down on us from some impregnable rampart.

The Yank raised his shadowy white arms and cursed. We saw his face glisten with sweat as he lashed past us. Then Jewdler rose up from the deck in front of old Tom, and whispered to him:

"Don't you want to save a man's life? What difference does it make whether you stay by this hooker or not? You could pretend you lost the key."

Old Tom leaned forward and said huskily: "I'm watchman of the ship."

"Well, what of it if you are? Ain't there no other ships?"

"She's going to Liverpool," said old Tom. "Ain't you heard the news? This ship goes to Liverpool, and where she goes I goes."

Liverpool! What hope was there of shaking the resolution of that old man whose withered heart was set on Liverpool? He sat mooning at us, very stiff, as if swathed in bandages — the old mummy! What earthly difference did it make where he was? His wife in Liverpool had probably deserted him. We thought there was something exasperating and inopportune in that old man's yearning to see his wife again. Was it likely that he had anything in common with that ardent lover in the sail-locker?

"Tom, have you fed him to-night?" whispered Jewdler.

"Ay," said Tom.

There he was close up in the dark; he went through the motion of scratching his ribs.

"How is he?"

"Why, comfortable," said Tom; "comfortable as an old shoe."

It was too much to believe.

A puff of wind came in our faces with that piercing land odor on it, and a spice, as it seemed, of sandalwood and sunbaked earth. Little Jewdler sighed desperately.

"He was going to get married, Tom," he said regretfully.

"Ay, that's right," said old Tom densely. "Let him marry."

"He can't now," wailed Jewdler. "They'll string him up."

"Well, that's certain, too," said old Tom.

He had the habit, exasperating to youth, of accepting all statements without amendment and without rebellion. He never reconciled conflicts. Experience had shown him they were irreconcilable. He had learned to submit himself austere to the fates, and bow his head beneath the yoke of time the oppressor.

Still, he was one of the finest sailormen under the canopy of heaven. He was watchman of the ship. He knew his duty.

"What are we going to say to this mission girl, when she comes aboard?" asked little Jewdler.

"She will have to sorrow," said old Tom harshly. "This will be her cross. We all have our cross, and this will be hers."

Was he bent on making all destinies as cruel as his own?

"He did kill the bo'sun, sure enough," said old Tom. "And there ain't enough of us is positive the bo'sun had a knife in his hand at the time."

"The Dane saw it," said Jewdler eagerly.

Old Tom gloomed at us reproachfully. We wanted to cast him into the sea, but we remembered in time that he was one of the finest sailormen under the canopy of heaven.

"Were n't you ever in love?" we whispered to him mournfully.

"Love — ha!" said old Tom. He squirmed in his singlet. The vast blue night grew deeper over us, bearing musky smells.

"Love — ha!"

We should loathe the memory of this which should have been a magic time for sailors — to be under tow in such a night of stars. But this time the savor of coming to land was lost. The yellow lights were like eyes — the eyes of those hounds of the law that were so soon to be set on the great body of Spike and bring it down.

The ship was like a dream ship stealing into an enchanted harbor, betraying life only in the watchful coals of those pipes along the topgallant rail.

And now all was over. The town lay fully revealed, shimmering, striking animated golden points into the surface of the harbor. We heard the roar of the anchor-chain tumbling up out of its iron locker — a voice from the tug:

"Let go. Give her forty fathom."

The immense black masts of the ship moved slowly against the stars as she swayed back on her chain.

There we were at last — quieted, after four months. The very deck under us seemed to have lost its spring. It was ponderous, like a rock-ledge to the soles of our feet. Had those hatches ever resounded to the thump of weather seas? Had Spike killed the bo'sun? Had we actually seen that ill-omened man tilted overside with the shackles at his ankles?

Driven to it by sheer disbelief, we approached the sail-locker. That ghastly white iron wall intimidated us. The wraith of Spike seemed to extend itself out of that

port with its poison-green brass rim. We laid our cheeks against the iron, whispering: "Spike, Spike."

Then we heard the noise of his chains. He was manacled at the wrists — tied to a ring in the wall.

Suddenly his face filled the port. We were shocked to see it. His eyes burned on us, luminous, like an animal's in the dark. We shrank back, as if the chains had sunk through to the soul and made a strange creature of him — less than man. We were desperately ashamed of this feeling, which in no way shook our loyalty.

"We've dropped anchor, Spike," said Jewdler.

"Ay," said Spike.

His voice was as still as the ship. Had he actually spoken? We could hear water dripping somewhere, and a link or two falling in Spike's chain.

Suddenly he murmured:

"I have filed this chain. Can you get the key to the locker? In God's name —"

We had to confess that we had failed. Staring in, we heard him fall back and say, in profound melancholy:

"I am a dead man."

It was actually like a voice from the tomb. We crowded up close to the port, looking into the glazed eyes of that doomed man whose soul was sinking in him like a fire dying down.

"I had rather be et by a shark," he whispered. "I would rather have my heart snapped out by a gray-nurse than swing."

"Swing!" He had spoken the word aloud. With his own lips that intrepid seaman had framed the abhorrent syllable that spelled the end.

We found no words deep enough to be a consolation to a man so far removed from the good offices of mere benevolence.

Then, in turning away to get a full breath, we saw that old Tom was coming off the section-head — coming down slowly and weightily, with the deliberation of an incorruptible man whom nothing can hasten and nothing can

retard. Yes, we had a mournful conviction that nothing was to be hoped from that detestable old fellow with his mind bent on Liverpool. His heart had withered with his body. He was as far from the tremors of youth as if he had been born old.

What did he portend? Of course, if he allowed the prisoner to escape, he must escape with him, since there would be no more peace on that ship. Well, what of it? Could n't the queer old codger get another ship bound for Liverpool? Well, could he? For twelve years he had been trying to do just that. Now, at last, the way was plain. But if he let the prisoner escape —

No, he would never do it. We felt that he was as obdurate as the iron wall we were leaning against.

We were interrupted by the voice of Spike floating through the port:

"Listen. That's the oars of the mission boat!"

We heard the sound of oars approaching the ship.

"It may be the harbor-master," mumbled Jewdler.

"No," said Spike. "She is coming."

His voice died.

At this moment across the quiet decks we heard the amused voice of the Old Man calling over to the mate:

"It's the mission boat. Lower away the accommodation steps."

Affrighted, we fled away from that port. The weight of tragedy was too heavy for us. Yet nothing could prevent us from pausing at the accommodation steps as the mission folk came over with their portable organ.

We saw the girl spring to the deck, laughing, without assistance, and look round her quickly. She knew the ship. We shrank behind the rack of capstan bars to avoid her questioning eye.

At this moment a slight wind sprang across the harbor, lifting the gray awning on the poop, and bringing a land fragrance with it, which forever fixed the scene in memory: the girl looking for her lover, in vain.

It was terrible to see her standing expectant in the

waist of that great ship, which seemed to be running over with four whispers of crime.

She sighed, twisted her hands together, and followed the organ.

Jewdler and I muttered together, seeing that they had set down the organ within a dozen feet of Spike's port. We crept over the hatch, wriggling on our bellies, and were in time to see her hang her hat on an iron belaying-pin — the second from the brace-pins.

The hair crawled on our necks. This was the pin Spike had used to crush in the skull of that bo'sun! We thought we heard his chains clank again. Certainly he must now be staring at her. The girl stood with her hands folded, while the organist offered prayer. Bitterly that ship stood in need of prayer.

It was quiet. The crew of that old *Forensic* were looming out of shadow. Their heavy arms hung down, they twisted spun yarn in their fists. Then she sang.

All was calm; you could fancy you were dreaming. The brine crystals were still sparkling in ridges on the deck, where the seas had been falling down into that corner not twenty hours back. Yes, at that very spot we had struggled on the braces with foam at our necks, and that dead bo'sun bellowing in our ears. How could we believe in the actuality of that slim girl singing there beside an organ? Yet she was there. The pure line of her cheek was sweetly drawn against the great crooked rail of the starboard fence, which gleamed red with blistered paint. Had we, in truth, ever seen that huge iron bulwark sinking in foam?

She ended her song.

Then, as the organist stood up to speak, she descried Jewdler and me lying on the hatch, and came toward us with a look of smiling indifference. But the moment she had glided into the shadow of the bridge, she whispered:

"Where is Jake Moran?"

She caught her breath with eagerness.

"He's on board, is n't he?"

We nodded and swallowed hard.

"Where is he?"

I felt her moist hand about my wrist. I was choking. I had never had anything soft like that wrap itself about me before.

"Where is he?" she said again.

We stared at her like two little penguins that have just swallowed something. You have seen them hump their shoulders and look baffled and secret, have n't you?

"He's in the sail-locker," said Jewdler. He pointed at that black port, which looked so grim against the white wall of the section-head.

"Why — why is n't he — on deck?"

"Chains," said Jewdler, gulping. "Locked in."

Suddenly we both blurted out in agonized tones:

"He killed the starboard bo'sun."

She seemed to slack and ruffle like a sail when you luff ship.

"All fair and square," we whispered. "He had to. The bo'sun was coming at him with a knife."

She was stunned. Something she had held shut in her hand dropped to the deck. We never knew what it was.

Still, we felt a strange solace in the sorrow of that woman. To linger near her, even as bearers of tragedy, was to experience something of the stimulation of romance. We saw in her eyes the light of some desperate protective instinct.

"Take me to him," she whispered.

Could we?

Glaring down the deck, we saw the sallow missionary talking to the crew in kindly tones. Those gentle precepts of his, falling on the ears of shaggy men, seemed to be numbered among the things that are drowned in storm, and overmatched by the sea's wickedness. The men were looking at him with rapt attention, with strange amusement, knowing that Spike the murderer was just behind him.

Old Tom was on the outermost edge of the circle.

When we touched him, he turned slowly, with his head solid on his huge shrunken shoulders. As soon as he spied the girl, he knew what was wanted of him.

"Come on, Tom," we urged him; "let her see him. You can come yourself."

The girl came toward us, trying to appear calm. A damp strand of bronze hair clung to her cheek; and the eye glittered woefully in the shadow of this. In another second she had stumbled over a ring-bolt, and this flung her suddenly against him. Old Tom, taking her by the shoulders, put her away from him slowly.

As if he knew his danger, his smoky eyes rested forbiddingly a moment on the desperate face of that girl. He swallowed, scratched his ribs, shook his head stiffly, as if bewildered by the nature of this attack.

Suddenly the mission girl made a swift gesture, laying one hand on her bosom, as if abandoning her heart to that old man without words. Her other hand touched my arm. She was trembling from head to foot.

"Come," said old Tom harshly.

We glared at him. Was it possible? He was actually shuffling toward the alleyway on which the iron door of the locker opened. We floated after him, rustling against pegged oilskins.

We heard the girl's quivering breath drawn as the key turned in the lock. The iron door swung open, and we were in a position to see Spike leaning out from the wall where he was chained.

Suddenly I recollected that he had filed his chain. Would he try to escape? No; he made no movement, save to move a little way behind a heap of musty canvas.

The girl uttered a faint cry, as if her heart were broken. Stumbling past us, she fell at his feet, putting her arms about him with that protective gesture which seemed to assert that he might rest content, for she would never let him go. Had she a power to reverse the malign decrees of men simply by fierce rebellion in the heart?

"You are not afraid of me?" said Spike in harsh tones. "You are not afraid of me?"

He looked down at her fiercely, strangely, as if at something lost to him, whose mist-like soft shadow still clung, deceiving him.

She shook her head, trembling against him. Lowering his arms about her, he let the chains slip, and stood up unshackled, holding her where the light, streaming through the port, fell on her face.

"You came too late," he said.

"No — no!" she cried. "Not too late. If you could not help it, you will not be punished."

Spike fixed her mournfully with a look of his old gentleness.

"I must die," he said distinctly. "Make up your mind to this."

For an instant he laid his cheek against hers. Then his eye fell on the figure of Tom, lingering in the door with distaste expressed in every line of his decrepit old body.

"They will take the skipper's word for it," he said. "The word of an able seaman is nothing."

Lying in his arms, she reached up her hands to his face and suddenly whispered:

"If you could come away now — in the mission boat — while he is talking. There is a freighter about to weigh anchor. You could escape, and come to me again.

Spike's eye gleamed; but he looked at old Tom almost with amusement.

"No chance," he said. "You can't bribe the jailer."

"Yes, come," she whispered, with the same strange insistence. She drew him unresisting over the heap of canvas; and, turning on old Tom, cried in a moment of concentrated passion:

"Who are you, to part us? I love him. Do you understand, old man? Let him go with me."

"Hah," said that old man surrounded by mysteries. "And what becomes of me?"

"Let him go," she said again, with hypnotic force.
"He shall not die!"

"Hah," said old Tom.

He opened his mouth, as if to hurl at her one of those contemptuous phrases of an old-fashioned sailor holding on to his duty like grim death. Perhaps in that moment the vision of Christian Street was strongly present to him. He had only to hold the key firm, turn it in the lock again, to attain Liverpool at last. The satisfaction of his twelve years' quest was near.

But the irony of the sea is eternal. It is said that the sea is salt with the tears of women who have sorrowed over its disasters. And yet, none but able seamen can know properly the atrocities of which it is guilty in its devilish unrest.

Old Tom suddenly uttered the amazing syllables:

"Take him."

He had betrayed himself in two words.

Without more, we crept aft in the shadow of the hatches. Would he repent and cry out, after all? Would the lure of Christian Street defeat him in the midst of his intended sacrifice?

We trembled and swallowed our hearts, seeing those red stars stream across the sky again. Looking back at the crew still clustered about the organ, we fixed our eyes on the little red hat hanging on the belaying-pin that had done the mischief.

"Good-bye, *Forensic*," murmured Spike Moran.

One by one, we dropped into that mission boat.

When old Tom came last of all with his concertina, he sat on it, and squeezed out a little sound, a little sob. Horror-struck, we leaned against the gray side of the ship, waiting. The black water came up to those scored and dented iron plates without a ripple.

What hugeness, what torment, what impregnability expressed in a ship's side! And what uncertainty. There was no movement over our heads, and we drifted away.

Spike rowed. The girl, taking the tiller ropes, leaned forward with a dawn of hope on her face, which we saw glimmering through darkness like a shell sinking in clear water.

Not a word was spoken. Holding our breath, we approached the red side of a tramp.

"Take in your oars," said the girl.

Drifting against that ship, we heard the ring of feet running on her iron decks and the sound of the chain going through the hawse-pipe. She was already weighing anchor.

At this moment old Tom's hand rasped on the plates and caught a trailing end of rope. He pulled: it came taut.

Staring aloft with wrinkled brow, he muttered, "There's a coal port just overhead."

Spike had already seen it. He rose from his oars, taking the girl in his arms and murmuring to her, "I will come again."

But at these words it seemed to me that old Tom shook his head, slowly, sadly. What was the promise of an able seaman to come again? The winds blow where they list.

The two who were young stood up together, silent, desperate: and, as her hands met behind his neck, she cried earnestly:

"You will come again? Jake, you will come?"

He kissed her. This was what pay he had for six months of soaking in the misery of five oceans. He went away in his skin, it may be said. And some phantom of promise seemed to whisper along the black side of the ship, as he ascended the rope. She was still standing, her arms lifted, even after he had left them. He slipped through the port.

And there was old Tom, looking around for a place to sit down. You see how age had betrayed him. He could no longer swarm up a rope.

Yes, he had lost his chance. Was n't it bitterness to

have been betrayed by some memory, some softening recollection of the wild justice of early love? I affirm to you that this was heroism. It's unlikely he ever got to Liverpool, you know. Too old. And he could n't go back to the *Forensic*. This last memory of his life was a memory of dereliction.

With a shamed face, he mumbled: "Another dollar for Gertie," sitting back in the stern-sheets, bewildered, scratching his ribs, with that slow motion of his, through the yellow singlet that had no buttons on the chest.

Just then the great tramp began to move. We heard the jar of the engines, and the clang of an iron lever, dropping from the winch, I suppose.

The woman was still staring at that black opening in the unknown ship that had swallowed up her lover; but old Tom, with mystery on every hand, stood up, bracing himself against the thwarts of the mission boat. Turning up his old face, full of grave despondency and puzzlement, he cried out in a rusty voice:

"Whar to?"

And, seeming to come out of the very skies, a harsh voice, rolling along the iron decks:

"Liverpool."